

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, NO
SUBJECT: PRESTOCKAGE OF BRITISH EQUIPMENT

1. THE NORWEGIAN AND BRITISH GOVERNMENT RECENTLY ANNOUNCED AN AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO PRESTOCK APPROXIMATELY 100 UK SWEDISH-MADE OVERSNOW VEHICLES (THE SAME MODEL USED BY THE NORWEGIAN MILITARY). IN THE PAST, THIS EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN CARRIED BACK AND FORTH AT HEAVY EXPENSE WHENEVER BRITISH TROOPS EXERCISED THEM IN THEIR REINFORCEMENT ROLE IN NORWAY.

2. DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN GOING ON FOR THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS OP THE POSSIBILITY OF STORING THEM IN NORWAY. NORWEGIAN DEFENSE MINISTER HANSEN AND HIS BRITISH COLLEAGUES AGREED TO DO SO DURING THE FORMER'S RECENT LONDON VISIT. DETAILS SUCH AS WHO MAINTAINS THE VEHICLES (VISITING UK TEAMS, NORWEGIAN MILITARY OR LOCAL CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS) AND WHO PICKS UP THE TAB ARE STILL BEING WORKED OUT. THE BRITISH MILITARY ATTACHE

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IN OSLO COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT THE LIMITED NORWEGIAN MAINTENANCE CAPABILITY WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN THE JOB BEING DONE BY CIVILIAN HIRE AND THE COSTS BEING SHARED BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE VEHICLES WILL ARRIVE AND BE PLACED IN STORAGE AT AN AS HET UNDESIGNATED NORTHERN SITE, WITHIN THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS.

3. THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF IMPROVING RECEPTION FACILITIES AND PROVIDING FOR PRESTOCKAGE OF REINFORCEMENT EQUIPMENT DURING THE PAST YEAR. THE CONSERVATIVES AND THEIR DEFENSE SPOKESMAN, PER HYSING-DAHL (CHAIRMAN OF THE STORTING DEFENSE COMMITTEE), HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY VOCIFEROUS IN URGING THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS, AS HAVE NATO AUTHORITIES SUCH AS MC CHAIRMAN GENERAL ZEINAR-GUNDERSEN AND CINC NORTH, GENERAL WHITELEY. COVERSATIONS HAVE BEEN HELD WITH THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT ON DEPLOYMENT OF THE CAST COMBAT TEAM BY AIR RATHER THAN BY SEA AND ON PRESTOCKING SOME OF THEIR EQUIPMENT. THE BRITISH/NORWEGIAN AGREEMENT TO STORE THE TRACKED VEHICLES IS THE FIRST CONCRETE RESULT, HOWEVER, OF THIS INCREASED NORWEGIAN INTEREST.

COMMENT: THE BRITISH AGREEMENT IS SIGNIFICANT NOT ONLY FOR ITS MILITARY IMPACT BUT ALSO BECAUSE THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ACTION FORTIFIES THE GON'S POSITION AS A FIRM SUPPORTER OF NATO PROJECTS AND ALLIANCE DEFENSE. THIS SHOWING IS PARTICULARLY USEFUL AS A COUNTER TO THE BAD PUBLICITY WHICH FOLLOWED THE JANUARY ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GON'S DECISION TO LIMIT FRG TROOP PARTICIPATION IN FUTURE NORTHERN NATO EXERCISES.

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